SPORTS

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FYI

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THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

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FILE PHOTOS

Craig O'Dear (left) and Greg Orman will be on ballots this fall as independent candidates, O'Dear for U.S. Senate in Missouri and Orman for governor of Kansas.

Missouri, Kansas become hubs of independents' efforts to upend politics

BY BRYAN LOWRY
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Kansas City could be the epicenter of a national political earthquake in November if voters on either side of the state line decide to elect a political independent in a top race.

Missouri hasn't sent an independent to the U.S. Senate in its nearly two centuries as a state, but Kansas City attorney Craig O'Dear says he can prevail in what promises to be one of the most competitive Senate races in the country.

In Kansas, Johnson County businessman Greg Orman hopes to be the first independent governor since Kansas officially became a state in 1861.

The two men have a similar message: They say the two-party system has made it impossible to solve problems at the state and federal level and a third force is needed to push both parties back to the political middle.

It's not a coincidence.

Both candidates are backed by the same organization, Unite America, which has recruited a slate of independent candidates to run in high-profile races in a half-dozen states.

"If one of those people breaks through, that's going to be a 9.0 earthquake in Washington, D.C.," O'Dear said about his fellow Senate candidates in Maryland and Wyoming.

Unite America, a Denver-based group previously known as the Centrist Project, existed in an early form when Orman mounted his unsuccessful run for U.S. Senate in 2014. He went on to serve on the group's advisory board before resigning to run for governor, and he helped recruit O'Dear into the race in Missouri.

"I've worked to recruit candidates across the country to help break the logjam in Washington and to give people better representation," Orman said when asked about his role in the overall movement.

O'Dear and other potential candidates met for a conference last summer in Philadelphia with Charles Wheelan, the group's founder.

"There's a big chicken and egg problem with independent candidates. People look at them and think they can't get elected, so they don't get out of the gate. Meanwhile, good candidates don't run because they think they can't get out of the gate," Wheelan said.

Wheelan's group is helping equip the candidates with resources that parties often provide, including a donor network and campaign professionals. The various campaigns are coordinating across states, said Joel Searby, the group's chief strategist.

"We knew that independent candidates needed a lot of the tools that the parties provide," Searby said.

One area where the group has found interested donors is the technology sector.

Marc Merrill, CEO of Riot Games, was one of the group's first seven-figure commitments

SEE INDEPENDENTS, 5A

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Court denies Trump plea on DACA

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court handed President Donald Trump a significant defeat Monday, turning down the administration's plea for a quick ruling that would have upheld the president's power to end special protections for so-called Dreamers.

The court's decision keeps in place a legal shield for nearly 700,000 young immigrants for the rest of this year, and perhaps longer, allowing people who have been covered by the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program to continue living and working legally in the U.S. Those whose existing DACA permits expire this year will also be allowed to apply for another two-year permit.

Although the court's action removes for now the threat of job loss and deportation, it also will extend the long-term uncertainty for the Dreamers – young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children. Congress has been stymied on a legislative solution to their situation, and without an immediate deadline to force action, lawmakers almost certainly will not try again to forge a compromise on immigration before this fall's midterm elections.

SEE SUPREME COURT, 5A

Missouri House leader names committee to investigate Greitens

BY JASON HANCOCK
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A Missouri House committee made up of five Republicans and two Democrats will investigate allegations that Gov. Eric Greitens threatened to release a nude photograph of a woman with whom he was having an affair to keep her from talking about it.

The governor was indicted last week by a St. Louis grand jury and charged with felony invasion of privacy. He's admitted to having an affair in 2015 but denied he blackmailed the woman.

The committee was appointed Monday by House Speaker Todd Richardson, a Poplar Bluff Republican, and its investigation is the first step toward possible impeachment.

Rep. Jay Barnes, a Jefferson City Republican and an attorney whose practice focuses on personal injury, privacy law and consumer protection, will chair the committee and lead the investigation.

Barnes previously served as general counsel of the Missouri Senate and policy counsel and speechwriter for former Republican Gov. Matt Blunt. During his tenure in the House he has chaired several legislative investigative committees, most notably during the 2011 inquiry into the failed artificial sweetener company that received incentives to build in northern Missouri.

Eric Greitens

"This committee's task is going to be to investigate the facts," Barnes said in a news conference Monday afternoon. "We're going to do so in a way that is fair, thorough and timely, and we're going to do it without being preordained to the results."

Barnes added the focus of the committee's investigation will be on the underlying facts of the indictment and the "circumstances surrounding that."

Other members of the committee:

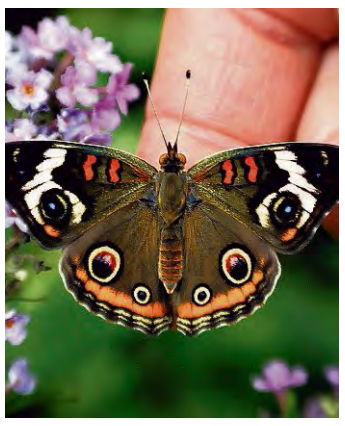
- Rep. Kevin Austin, a Springfield Republican and an attorney whose practice focuses on business counseling and litigation and insurance defense.
- Rep. Shawn Rhoads, a West

SEE GREITENS, 2A

LOCAL

POWELL GARDENS FEARS FEEDLOT

The prospect of a feedlot with thousands of cattle has Powell Gardens concerned about "a potential threat to the beauty and peace" of the botanical attraction. **8A**



IN DEPTH

CHINA'S NEW ERA OF STRONGMEN

President Xi Jinping is setting himself up to lead China indefinitely, the most significant sign of the world's decisive tilt toward authoritarian rule. **6A**

LOCAL

CDC: FLU SEASON HAS PEAKED

Don't be lulled by reports that this year's awful flu season is finally on the wane. Here in Kansas City, that's only half true. **3A**

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